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**MERE MICHEAUX** ✽ BY **FREDERIC WRIGHT**



**MERE MICHEAUX** lived down in French Quarter near Houston Street. As she had seen seventy-five years of life go by her, she was not pretty.

Her chin nearly met her nose and she mumbled her words. Her hair, what there was of it, was yellowish grey, and hung over her eyes. Her hands were claw-like, but they served for her vocation—which was sorting rags. She worked in a dark cellar on Sullivan Street, in company with two other old women and a “boss.”

Once on a time Mere Micheaux had been “La Petite Micheaux,” a grisette of the Quartier Latin. This the dwellers in the neighborhood did not know. They considered her a disagreeable old woman, with a fine command of indecent language.

Mere Micheaux lived in a back garret, up a dirty court, in company with a starved looking cat. However, Mere Micheaux gave her half her own food, and never beat her even when she was very drunk.

Mere Micheaux was the terror of children, who considered her a witch, yet if it had not been for her, little Clairette would have starved to death. When Clairette’s mother died, the child, with the instinct of the wounded animal, would have hidden away. But Mere Micheaux took her to the dingy garret and gave her of her crusts.

There was less for the cat and herself, but by curtailing the drinking, the three managed to get along.

When Winter came, Mere Micheaux piled all the rags in the room on Clairette.

She shivered herself to sleep every night, and her cough and rheumatism were not the better for it.

Then came Pneumonia, the Dispensary Doctor, and finally, Death. She did not die in the odor of sanctity, but as she had lived. She reviled the Priest ’till he fled, and with her last breath cursed God.

But her last look was for Clairette, who was sobbing beside the bed.

**Enter Maid, skipping merrily in she announces the coming of Beauty, whom they all love. ✽ Enter Beauty. The people scatter flowers at her feet —Song.**

**Enter numerous boxes, bundles, etc. Containing gifts for Beauty. These are opened and the contents are admired by townspeople,—when the last few boxes are reached, they re-**



The neighbors say that she is damned,  
but I hope she's not. It would be lonely  
in Heaven for Clairette and the mangy  
cat if she were.

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### HOPE.

Today would be a pauper were  
It not that he may borrow  
From one who can all gifts confer,—  
The Golden Prince, Tomorrow.

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### BALLADE OF UNFORTUNATES JOHN NORTHERN HILLARD

Brothers, who strive with the aching heart,  
Battling with poverty, sorrow and care,  
Dreaming strange dreams from life apart,  
Seeking sweet fame or here or there,—  
I give you greetings, and raise a prayer  
To cheer you forth on the valiant quest,  
Or ever the trail be rough or fair,  
God grant that it may lead to rest.

Poverty chills Love's warmest heart,  
Ambition will wither when singed with  
care,

And few can follow the paths of Art  
When they wind through leagues of poi-  
soned air ;  
And the poet who dreams in the garret  
bare,

The teeth of the hunger-wolf at his breast,  
For the sake of the song I raise my prayer,  
God grant that it may lead to rest.

You who toil in the busy mart,  
Blinded with lust of the golden glare,  
Never heeding a broken heart,  
But robbing here and cheating there,  
With never a thought, much less a care,  
For a struggling soul by your greed opprest,  
Heed well my song and join my prayer,  
God grant that it may lead to rest.

### L'ENVOI.

Prince, who knows how the fight may fare ?  
The Sphinx's riddle may be a jest ;  
Scorn not the dreamer, but join my prayer,  
God grant that it may lead to rest.

veal as their carrier a miniature  
darky. \* The largest parcel, an  
elaborate casket, on being opened  
by the maid, contains a servant for  
Beauty.

Enter First Merchant. Announces  
that he has purchased a farm and  
will remove his family to same.  
Exit Three Sisters and First Mer-  
chant, followed by townspeople.

